



## Harford farm could grow business park

County lost 16,000 acres of farm in '90's

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Harford County officials believe a 70-acre former farm could be transformed into a top-tier business park that would feed off the growth of Aberdeen Proving Grounds, which is scheduled to receive 5,000 new employees under a federal plan for military bases.

The Havre de Grace land, known as the Barker Farm, is on the selling block after being rezoned in 2001 to allow commercial development, according to Michael Leaf of Hodes, Ulman, Pessin & Katz, the lawyer representing the sellers.

The 60-year-old former cattle farm and orchard fits into the county's plan to build from the strength of nearby Aberdeen Proving Ground, which would grow by 5,000 employees under the Defense Department's initial recommendation presented to the Base Realignment and Closure Commissions.



This aerial photo of western Harford County shows the 70-acre Barker Farm property, outlined in white, where officials and developers believe a business park could be built to serve the needs of the growing, nearby Aberdeen Proving Ground. Two developers have bid on the property, which is expected to sell within three months.

"We expect that due to that new density of job creation, the Barker property would meet the criteria for the locations of those new research and contracting facilities and the vendors that would serve the new businesses and companies that land in the Aberdeen Proving Ground," said Craig S. Lewis, a broker at Colliers Pinkard, the Baltimore-based real estate firm that has partnered with RKS Realty Inc., of Bel Air, to sell the farm.

Bordered by Interstate 95 and Maryland Route 155, and seated west of an upscale housing project at the Bulle Rock Golf Course under development by Clark Turner Cos., the farm is considered a prime location for corporate headquarters and other class A office space.

"It's a strategic mid-Atlantic location," said J. Thomas Sadowski, director of the Harford County Office of Economic Development.

The county would like to see financial services, engineering or research development, among other uses, on the land. The area is not zoned for distribution, Sadowski said.

"I think it's a perfect headquarters site," he said. "Ideally, that's what we'd like to see."

Interest in the property has come from developers and investors from Maryland and beyond, Lewis said. He expects the property to sell within three months.

Brokers have received two official bids on the property so far, Lewis said, declining to comment on the names of bidders or price tags.

Clark Turner, president of Clark Turner Cos. said his company is among bidders on the land, although he declined to comment on his plans.

The property would complement the beginnings of a corporate campus Turner began constructing adjacent to the



## **Harford farm could grow business park** *(continued)*

farm. A 12,000-square-foot office building is already standing and leased at the site. Another 200,000 square feet of office space is in the works, Turner said.

A sprawling business park would be nothing new to Turner, who is in the midst of transforming the former Bata Shoe factory in Belcamp as the centerpiece of Harford's new Water's Edge Corporate Campus.

Two 90,000-square-foot buildings are already complete on the site and a 100,000-square-foot building is set to break ground this summer. A hotel, waterfront restaurant and about 10 single-story buildings are also planned.

While the surge of development in Harford has officials enthusiastic about a boosted tax base, there are also concerns that the county is losing its agricultural heritage.

More than 16,000 acres of Harford farmland disappeared from 1992 to 2002, from 97,300 acres to 81,400 acres, according to the most recent statistics by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

More than 30,000 acres are permanently preserved in Harford, according to County Councilman Lance C. Miller, a Republican whose district includes Northern Harford County.

But the Barker farm, with its highway access and acreage, is one piece of property that seems fated for development.

"It's on the outskirts of Havre De Grace development, and just logistically that parcel is going to be developed," he said.

"That piece there fits well in the middle of the development that is currently going on."